

Democracy & Education

Segregation, the “Black Spatial Imagination,” and Radical Social Transformation

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Abstract

This response discusses the complexity of racial segregation in U.S. cities today and an emerging education movement for equity and racial justice. Racial segregation has been and continues to be a potent, and contested, strategy of containment, subordination, and exploitation, but African Americans have also, out of necessity, turned racial segregation into collective survival, radical solidarity, resistance, and counter-hegemonic economic and social relations. New geographies of racial containment, exclusion, and incorporation in the neoliberal, postindustrial city have spawned a new antiracist, antineoliberal education movement. While people of color have the right to live and attend school anywhere, African American and other parents and students of color are concretely fighting against racist school closings and for equitable public schools in their neighborhoods as part of the battle against displacement and dispossession. I argue that the campaign for sustainable community schools and the program of transformative policy reforms in the Platform of the Movement for Black Lives exemplify a move toward an anticapitalist, antiracist vision of radical economic and political democracy and self-determination.

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IN “RACE, RESIDENTIAL Segregation and the Death of Democracy,” Lori Latrice Martin and Kevin Varner (2017) argued that “Death by residential segregation and the threat of the endurance of residential segregation as a tool to perpetuate inequality in America poses to the principle of democracy are among the most significant consequences of a legacy of the perpetuation of the myth of White superiority and Black and Brown inferiority” (p. 2). They argued that the effects of racial segregation are perpetuated by the “White racial frame” (Feagin, 2010), “the beliefs that White people have in their virtuosity, White people’s use of stereotypes, and the role that narratives from within communities of color play in addressing the previously mentioned aspects” (p. 5). The White racial frame explains “the persistence of residential segregation amidst growing racial ethnic diversity in the

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United States and demonstrate[s] why current efforts to narrow racial and ethnic gaps on a host of sociological indicators have failed.” (p. 2).

Martin and Varner (2017) proposed adopting a framework of “segregatory realism” to help shift policies that perpetuate racial oppression. Segregatory realism, particularly in housing and education, holds that, in every social and economic dimension, White people benefit from racial segregation at the expense of people of color. The tenets of segregatory realism, as the authors developed them, hold that racial segregation is not a crisis but is “in line with the design and the demands of society” (p. 7), serves the interests of Whites against the interests of people of color, and is driven by economic imperatives, and supposed “reforms” benefit the “economic interests of Whites” (p. 8). They concluded that equity—redistribution of resources from Whites to people of color to compensate for past injustices—“is the only course of action that can counterbalance the racist underpinnings of segregation” (p. 8).

In this commentary, I engage some of the complexity and dialectics of racial segregation in U.S. cities today and non-reformist strategies for change. I agree with the authors’ (2017) powerful indictment of residential segregation and its racialized consequences, including their powerful framing of “death by segregation.” But drawing on current education and liberation movements, I want to continue the conversation by foregrounding a discussion of contested urban space and the power and self-determination of Black, working-class, low-income communities. Departing from Martin and Varner, I locate the roots of racial segregation and racial oppression in the intertwined structural and ideological logics of White supremacy and capitalism. My analysis points toward a radical strategy of economic, political, and social transformation—the seeds of which are germinating in current social movements for racial, economic, and social justice.

Racial segregation is undeniably a pivotal instrument and outcome of White supremacy. The violent history of racial segregation is a defining feature of U.S. society. Residential segregation and concomitant devaluation of Black housing, schools, and public services have produced dramatic disparities in Black and White wealth, life expectancy, food and housing security, and opportunity. As Martin and Varner (2017) argued, “where one lives, in conjunction with one’s race, speaks volumes to life experiences and opportunities” (p. 2). Ideologically, racial segregation is both a result of and generator of the “possessive investment in whiteness” (Lipsitz, 1998). The systemic racial inequities that have defined the U.S. education system are, and have been, spatialized. As Martin and Varner showed, residential segregation provides both context and rationale for White educational advantages and Black and other people of color educational disadvantages. Even in schools that are supposedly desegregated, internal segregation through academic tracking and special programs reproduces racial segregation and inequitable educational opportunities (Oakes, 1985).

But what if we think about the history of racial segregation dialectically in relation to the agency of communities of color and Black self-determination? What if we consider how the spatialization of race has been affected by racialized neoliberal urban

restructuring? What if we extend our critique of systemic racial inequality, anti-Black state violence, and domination to its roots in racial capitalism? What would this mean for how we think about “democracy”? And what are the imperatives of a struggle for racial justice in education in the context of the multiple crises of neo-liberal capitalism and the state’s increasing reliance on violence to contain hyper-segregated, economically impoverished Black working-class people? How might these questions frame our analysis and point strategically toward a program for racial justice and economic, political, and social democracy? In this essay, I sketch out some responses to these questions and foreground emergent grassroots programs of non-reformist/transformational policy reforms toward an anti-capitalist, antiracist future.

Dialectics of Racial Segregation and Solidarity in a Shifting Urban Political Economy

Racial segregation has been and continues to be a potent, and contested, strategy of racial containment, subordination, and exploitation. The architecture of segregated communities (e.g., high-rise public housing projects), urban planning decisions (e.g., construction of highways as racial demarcation boundaries), government policy (e.g., discriminatory housing and zoning law and public infrastructure decisions), education policy (e.g., segregated and inequitable schools), and strategies of capital accumulation (e.g., real estate redlining, investment/disinvestment) have all “spatialized Blackness,” restricting movement and constructing Black urban communities as carceral spaces (Shabazz, 2015). These public/private practices and policies are an iteration of the spatialized terror, violent uprooting, displacement, containment, exploitation, and domination that marked the entire process of settler colonialism, enslavement, state-sanctioned apartheid, and imperialism since its outset (Horne, 2018; McKittrick, 2006).

But critical and cultural geographers (e.g., Lefebvre, 1996; Soja, 1999) have argued that space is also socially produced, its meanings materially and discursively contested. Black geographers and critical theorists have demonstrated that spaces of racial containment and domination have been historically, and are today, also spaces of resistance and reimagining. Geographies of domination and racial and sexual violence are also “oppositional Black geographies” (McKittrick, 2006) of resistance, emancipation, humanization, place-making, community building, and identity formation (Haymes, 1995; hooks, 1990). African Americans have, out of necessity, turned racial segregation and spatial exclusion into places of collective survival and social solidarity (Gordon Nembhard, 2014; Lipsitz, 2011). Out of racially segregated, marginalized, and exploited Black communities have emerged radical political organizing, everyday resistance, rebellions, struggles for self-determination, creativity, solidarity economies, cooperative social relations, cultural and artistic creation, and radical social imaginaries (Akuno, 2017; Camp, 2016; Georgakas & Surkin, 1998; Horne, 1997). The impacts and meanings of urban residential segregation, in particular, have shifted in relation to shifts in the political economy of the city. Chicago’s Southside African American Bronzeville community illustrates the trajectory from

state-sanctioned and enforced racial segregation, to growth of the Black Metropolis, to disinvestment and state abandonment, to gentrification, displacement, and place-based resistance.

Racial Segregation and Radical Solidarity

Black studies scholar George Lipsitz (2011) argued that while not all Whites endorse the White spatial imaginary, every White person benefits from “the association of white places with privilege, from the neighborhood and race effects that create unequal and unjust geographies of opportunity” (p. 28). While racial segregation undoubtedly institutionalizes Whiteness and its benefits, we miss its full genesis if we do not see it as a central strategy of capital accumulation. African Americans fleeing the South in the Great Migration (1910–1930) were forcibly segregated in Bronzeville, driven into substandard housing, pressed into low-wage labor in the booming industrial and domestic labor economy, and subjected to White racist violence (Shabazz, 2015). Real estate interests, banks, and the state colluded to ensure the exclusion of African Americans from housing markets beyond racially segregated zones on the South and West sides of the city. Residential segregation “created geographically organized vulnerability for Blacks” (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 55) while guaranteeing exorbitant profits for White owners of substandard rental units and real estate companies. As Coates (2014) described the path to racially segregated housing on Chicago’s West Side, a cabal of White racists, the state, real estate investors, and the banks enforced and profited from the containment of African Americans in Black residential zones. Their profits, like those of the slave trade, contract labor, a two-tiered racialized labor force, and more are the basis for today’s racial capitalism. Underpinned by discriminatory federal housing law, racially exclusionary practices of redlining and contract buying coerced African American homebuyers into corrupt financial arrangements that defrauded them of mortgage payments, reduced the value of their property, deprived them of acquiring wealth through home ownership, and produced super-profits for predatory White real estate operators and ultimately Wall Street banks. These practices and policies exacted a “racial tax” on Black families while securing unfair advantages for Whites who received government subsidies for suburban homeownership (Lipsitz, 2011, p. 34). As Coates showed, the effects of these policies live on in Chicago’s disinvested and economically impoverished Black communities and second-class schools. They are gears in the machine of racial capitalism.

But this is only part of the story. The history of residential segregation, like Black Reconstruction, urban rebellions of the 1960s, and the current Movement for Black Lives, is also the story of freedom struggles and African Americans persistently struggling to claim their own destiny and space. Although the collusion of the state and capital and vigilantism of White racists confined African Americans in Chicago and throughout the U.S. to racially defined zones of second-class public services, including schools, Bronzeville, despite racial oppression and exploitation, developed as a hub of African American culture and enterprise known as the Black Metropolis (Patillo, 2007). In *How Racism Takes Place*, Lipsitz (2011) argued that while racial segregation created

“geographically organized vulnerability for Blacks” (p. 58), African Americans turned “segregation into congregation.” Lipsitz argued that African Americans, subjected to the exclusions and brutalities of segregation, out of necessity created “radical solidarities,” counter-hegemonic economic and social relations—mutual aid, cooperation, and exchange economies. In her account of the history of Black cooperative economics, Gordon Nembhard (2014) chronicled the development of homegrown grassroots Black cooperative economic and social benefits projects and their important role in struggles for racial justice. Racial segregation fostered recognition of the entwined destinies of Black people that provided ideological grounding for the civil rights movement, although class differences also fostered differing strategies, and complex dynamics of both racial solidarity and middle-class elitism and complicity (Patillo, 2007; Smith, 2012).

Resistance to racial segregation was a central impetus for the civil rights movement. The famous 1963 Chicago school boycott led by thousands of Black parents, students, and teachers who surrounded city hall to demand an end to overcrowded, substandard racially segregated schools challenged the connection between residential segregation and second-class schooling. But, motivated by the Black Power movement, Black student organizing in the late 1960s shifted toward a more revolutionary claim to self-determination. The 1968 citywide strike by Black high school students demanded community control of schools in Black communities, Black history classes, and more Black administrators (Danns, 2003). In the 1960s and into the 1970s, the concentrated poverty, oppression, and super-exploitation of the segregated urban Black working-class gave rise to revolutionary African American organizing (e.g., the Black Panther Party and the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement), urban uprisings, and political programs that called for dismantling U.S. racial capitalism and for radical economic, political, and social transformation of Black communities and the U.S. as a whole (Camp, 2016; Georgakas & Surkin, 1998).

Neoliberal Urban Geographies of Racial Isolation, Containment, and Displacement

The patterns of Northern urban residential segregation established during 20th-century industrialization and post–World War II White flight provided the context for new geographies of racial containment, exclusion, and incorporation in the neoliberal, postindustrial city and a new antiracist, anti-neoliberal education movement. Mass deindustrialization, beginning in the 1970s, coupled with the state’s violent suppression of revolutionary Black uprisings and political and labor organizing in the 1960’s and 1970’s and a state strategy of mass incarceration of “disposable” working-class African Americans, created conditions for a new phase of urban capital accumulation under the aegis of the neoliberal carceral state (Camp, 2016; Gilmore, 2007). Transnational and local real estate investors and financial speculators zeroed in on decapitalized inner-city areas for a new round of investment—pushing out the people who lived there. In the latest iteration of Black disposability and profiting off racialized urban space, devalorized Black (and some Latinx) areas of the city are

juicy prospects for “revitalization” (Lipman, 2011). Facilitated by neoliberal policies to dismantle public housing and close public schools, racially segregated Black communities like Bronzeville, and some Latinx communities as well, are now sites of upscale housing and consumption, boutique public schools, and refurbished public spaces for the new gentry while remaining Black low-income families are relegated to newly privatized charter schools. Areas previously pathologized as “bad neighborhoods” have been rebranded as ethnic heritage sites for urban space marketing (Betancur & Smith, 2016). The sites of former public housing projects in Bronzeville have been remade as publicly subsidized gentrified complexes of town homes, condominiums, and rental units dubbed “Legends South” and “Jazz on the Boulevard” (Lipman, 2011, 2004) as previous tenants are priced out and pushed out, far from their neighborhoods.

In sum, the postindustrial neoliberal city is marked by a new dystopic racially and economically polarized spatial order. Luxury zones of state-incentivized gentrification for the primarily White upper-middle-class and upper-class and the explosion of corporate downtown development and urban spectacles are facilitated by the displacement of Black, Latinx, and in some instances White working-class residents. Other long-disinvested, low-income Black communities are zones of public and private abandonment, shrinkage, and containment by the full apparatus of the violent carceral state (Camp & Heatherton, 2016; Lipman, 2015). Chicago, one of the most segregated cities in the U.S., is iconic of this new carceral neoliberal urban landscape. In fiscal year 2017, the city allocated 38.6% of its \$3.7 billion general fund budget to policing (Center for Popular Democracy, Law for Black Lives, & Black Youth Project 100, 2017). Some African American areas of the city have such high rates of incarceration they are called “Million Dollar Blocks” for the cost to incarcerate their residents (Million Dollar Blocks, 2015).

In the eyes of capital and the White spatial imaginary, these “spaces of reserve” are on hold, awaiting future development (Betancur & Smith, 2017, p. 32), minus the now-disposable Black families who live there and whose labor was a backbone of Chicago’s industrial growth. This has had profound consequences for urban Black populations. Chicago’s Black population shrunk by over 250,000 between 2000 and 2016. Significantly, of the almost 56,000 Black Chicagoans who left the city from 2010 to 2015, most were young and low-income (Loury, 2017). There was little difference in the population of middle- and upper-middle-class African Americans during this period. In keeping with official multicultural and neoliberal antiracist discourse (Melamed, 2011), a stratum of Black political elites, professionals, and CEOs have been incorporated into the neoliberal order as state functionaries and managers of gentrification, neoliberal governance, and austerity as the price of admission to gentrified and affluent communities, selective public schools, and the halls of power and privilege (see Taylor, 2016). For example, Chicago Public Schools currently has a Black CEO and Black president of the board, and Chicago has a deeply inequitable school system; Black city council members have collaborated with the mayor to close and privatize schools and facilitated gentrification in Black communities

(Lipman, 2017). For working-class African Americans in cities across the U.S., today’s racialized urban geographies are defined by dispossession and removal (Lipman, 2011).

While people of color must have the right to live and attend school anywhere in the city, concretely, working-class African American and other parents and students of color in cities across the U.S. are fighting for “the choice of a world class neighborhood school within safe walking distance of our homes” (Journey for Justice Alliance Education Platform, 2015). This is a central pillar in the battle against “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey, 2005). Chicago has closed, phased out, consolidated, or “turned around” (subcontracted to external operators) over 165 schools since 2001. In what Lipsitz (2011) called the fatal coupling of “race, place, and power,” (p. 61) around 88% of affected students were African American in a school district where currently 37% of students are Black. While schools in Black communities have been disinvested in, destabilized, stripped of students through the destruction of public housing and gentrification, and replaced by privately operated charter schools, the district’s investment in state-of-the-art new public schools has disproportionately benefited mostly White upper-middle-class families (Lipman, 2011, 2017). In recent years, Detroit, New York, and Chicago each closed more than 100 public schools; Columbus, Ohio; Pittsburgh; St. Louis; Houston; Philadelphia; Washington, DC; Kansas City; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Baltimore closed more than 25 (Journey 4 Justice Alliance, 2014). New Orleans closed every traditional neighborhood public school. This racialized pattern of school closings and privatization contributes to forced displacement, gentrification, and community disinvestment constitutive of the neoliberal restructuring of the city and its economically and racially polarized geography (Lipman, 2011). These are the political, economic, and racial logics that an emerging urban education movement is forced to contend with. Racial segregation has been and continues to be a vehicle of White supremacy and capital accumulation, but people also have the right to stay put (Imbroscio, 2008). They have the right to economically flourishing neighborhoods with meaningful and well-paid jobs, quality affordable housing, free quality health care and education, healthy food, a clean safe environment *where they live and have built community*—and the right to shape the city in their own vision (Lefebvre, 1996).

The full-on neoliberal assault on public education, beginning in the early 2000s, particularly school closings and privatization, provoked resistance led by parents and students of color and teachers in cities across the U.S. This emerging movement is demanding an end to school closings, markets, and privatization. It is organizing for revitalized public schools in working-class Black and Brown communities that are centers of, and led by, the community—schools with equitable resources, rich culturally relevant curricula, genuine parent participation, restorative justice not racist punitive discipline, a full complement of services and supports to students and families, and more (Journey 4 Justice Alliance, 2014). For example, the Journey 4 Justice Alliance (J4J) is a coalition of grassroots community, youth, and parent-led Black and Brown organizations in 24 cities. J4J’s Platform for an

Equitable and Just School System Now! calls for “Federal funding for 10,000 Sustainable Community Schools.”¹

In Chicago, a coalition of community and parent organizations and the Chicago Teachers Union is organizing for a sustainable community school district, initially focusing on the most inequitably resourced schools in Black and Latinx communities. A frequent refrain in the 14 years fighting school closings and privatization in Chicago is all children should be able to attend a world-class school in their neighborhood. Closing schools is a way to push Black and Brown, low-income, working-class people out of the city (Lipman, Vaughan, & Gutierrez, 2014).

Community organizing to defend *and* strengthen neighborhood schools speaks to the complicated character of schools in racially segregated neighborhoods in the context of neoliberal restructuring. On one hand, public schools in many Black and some Latinx neighborhoods are exemplars of drastically inequitable school systems, and many have checkered histories of racist policies and practices. On the other hand, they carry rich legacies of intellectual and cultural accomplishments forged in the face of racial segregation. They are rooted in the histories of their communities and the generations that have attended them. They have committed parents and teachers and aspiring students. Public schools are typically anchors in low-income communities, and defending them is essential to staunch the loss of public and private resources and displacement. This was dramatically illustrated by the expulsion of Black working-class people from New Orleans and the appropriation of their public schools after Hurricane Katrina (Buras, Randels, Salaam, & Students at the Center, 2010). Parents and students fighting school closings often describe their schools as like “family” (Lipman et al., 2014). Closing neighborhood public schools and displacing children, sometimes multiple times, with unsafe transfers to other schools, is a form of forced mobility and anti-Black state violence. Parents whose schools were closed in 2013 said their children were “grieving” and they were grieving (Lipman et al., 2014). In August 2015, 12 parents, grandparents, and teachers went on a 34-day hunger strike to reopen and transform Dyett High School in Bronzeville. A Dyett hunger striker, and grandmother, described school closings as “a hate crime.”

Racial Capitalism, Self-Determination and “the Black Spatial Imaginary”

Lipsitz (2011) argued the spatial logics of European settler colonialism were rooted in Europeans’ desire for “pure and homogenous spaces” against the impurity of the racialized other (pp. 29–30). He traced the cultural politics of the “White spatial imaginary” from settler colonialism to racially segregated housing markets, coordinated and facilitated by the collaboration of the state, wealthy corporations, real estate developers, and banks.

“Concentrated residential segregation enacted in concrete spatial form the core ideology of White supremacy—that Black people ‘belonged’ someplace else” (p. 28). Linking to the acquisitive culture of capitalism, Lipsitz argued that centuries of the enactment of this ideology produced the “hostile privatism” of the White spatial imaginary that “views space primarily as a locus for the generation of exchange value” (p. 30). While suburban Whites gained material and psychological advantages from hostile privatism, the enormous benefits of racial segregation were accrued by the titans of capital and the perpetuation of the capitalist system. This was apparent in the financial crisis of 2008 with Black homeowners’ vulnerability to subprime loans which was a concrete result of residential segregation that devalued Black property and prevented the accumulation of Black wealth. The mass home foreclosures that followed led to the greatest loss of Black wealth in history, while the culprits, the Wall Street banks, were protected by the government (Cooper & Bruenig, 2017), increasing the already dramatically expanding racial wealth gap over the past 30 years (Collins, Asante-Muhammed, Hoxie, & Nieves, 2016).

The enslavement of Africans and genocide of Native peoples were foundational for the development of capitalism, and the White spatial imaginary has been central to capital accumulation through redlining and legalized residential segregation, subprime mortgages and home foreclosures, gentrification of Black and some Latinx working-class communities, and decapitalization of “disposable” areas for future investment. Racism has also served to legitimate segmented labor markets and the super-exploitation of low-wage sectors with concentrations of people of color. It has divided the working-class and been a principle factor in the weakness and political backwardness of U.S. labor unions that have failed to resist the neoliberal onslaught on the standard of living of the majority of people and the entrapments of liberal democracy (Taylor, 2016). Racism is a political-economic project. “Thus racism takes place in the United States not because of the irredeemably racist character of whites as individuals, but because the racial project of whiteness is so useful to elites as a mechanism for preserving hierarchy, exploitation and inequality at large” (Lipsitz, 2011, pp. 42–43).

The White spatial imaginary masks an incredibly unequal, unjust, and untenable neoliberal capitalist economic and social order that has produced the greatest concentration of wealth in the fewest hands in history. As Taylor (2016) has pointed out, there are 400 billionaires in the U.S. *because* there are 45 million people in poverty (p. 194). The multiple crises of neoliberal racial capitalism—economic, social, political, spiritual—permeate the lives of the vast majority of people and threaten the planet itself. We cannot separate the oppression, hyper-exploitation, and state violence experienced by people of color from the extreme economic inequality, unbearable debt, lack of affordable housing, alienating and low-paid work, militarism, alienation and despair, and more that characterize much of U.S. society. At this conjuncture, human well-being and the survival of the ecosystem are simply incompatible with racial capitalism. Any program for racial justice and democracy that does not target a crisis-ridden, violent

1 The five pillars of sustainable community schools are: (a) relevant, rigorous, and engaging curriculum; (b) supports for quality teaching, not punitive standardized tests; (c) appropriate wraparound supports for every child; (d) student-centered school climate; and (e) transformative parent and community engagement.

White supremacist, hetero-patriarchal, capitalist order *and* compensate for past harm and injustice is, frankly, insufficient and unrealizable.

Transformative Policy Reforms

What are the imperatives of a struggle for racial justice in education in the context of the multiple crises of neoliberal capitalism and the state's increasing reliance on multiple forms of implicit and explicit violence to contain hyper-segregated, economically impoverished Black working-class people? Crises create an opening to envision alternatives to the status quo. They make seemingly utopian alternatives practical. The Movement for Black Lives Platform (2016) states: "We reject false solutions and believe we can achieve a complete transformation of the current systems, which place profit over people and make it impossible for many of us to breathe." How does this framework relate to actual struggles for equity and justice in education at this moment? Transformative policy reforms, or a strategy of "non-reformist reforms" (Gorz, 2000), bridge immediate struggles for people's needs with the long-term goal of an anti-capitalist, anti-racist alternative. As Kali Akuno (2017), cofounder of Cooperation Jackson, summarized, non-reformist reforms weaken systems of oppression and shift power relations:

Demands and reforms that improve conditions in people's immediate lives, but which don't strengthen the capitalist system, but instead subvert its logic, up end its social relations, and dilute its strengths. These reforms seek to create new logics, new relations, and new imperatives that create a new equilibrium and balance of forces to weaken capitalism and enable the development of an anti-capitalist alternative. (p. 17)

Transformative policy reforms that target neoliberal racial capitalism and insist on equity, reparations, and self-determination are on the agendas of emerging social movements in education and beyond. For example, the Movement for Black Lives Platform (Movement for Black Lives Platform, 2016) for racial justice in education includes demands for redistribution of resources, reparations for past harm, community control, and expanded social rights to public goods:

- *Reparations for the systemic denial of access to high quality educational opportunities in the form of full and free access for all Black people (including undocumented, currently, and formerly incarcerated people) to lifetime education including: free access and open admissions to all public universities and colleges, technical education (technology, trade, and agricultural), educational support programs, retroactive forgiveness of student loans, and support for lifetime learning programs. (<https://policy.m4bl.org/reparations/>)*
- *An End to the Privatization of Education and Real Community Control by Parents, Students and Community Members of Schools Including Democratic School Boards and Community Control of Curriculum, Hiring/Firing, and Discipline Policies. (<https://policy.m4bl.org/community-control/>)*
- *A reallocation of funds at the federal, state, and local levels from policing and incarceration (JAG, COPS, VOCA) to long-term safety*

strategies such as education, local restorative justice services, and employment programs. (<https://policy.m4bl.org/invest-divest/>)

- *A constitutional right at the state and federal levels to a fully funded education, which includes a clear articulation of the right to: a free education for all, special protections for queer and trans students, wrap around services, social workers, free health services (including reproductive body autonomy), a curriculum that acknowledges and addresses students' material and cultural needs, physical activity and recreation, high-quality food, free daycare, and freedom from unwarranted search, seizure, or arrest. (<https://policy.m4bl.org/invest-divest/>)*

Addressing the intensification of racial inequality and injustice since *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Journey 4 Justice Alliance (2018) program for equitable education calls for an "overdue and bold commitment from policy-makers at all levels to acknowledge and address the harm from institutional racism and racist policies that have undermined efforts to improve schools in Black and Brown communities across the nation" (p. 3). The J4J resistance to neoliberal privatization and for sustainable community schools is rooted in racial justice and self-determination: "In today's political climate more than ever, it is important for local communities to build the power needed to control how education is administered in their communities" (Journey for Justice Alliance, <https://www.j4jalliance.com/campaigns/>).

The Black Spatial Imaginary and Self-Determination

Lipsitz (2011) contrasted the acquisitive individualism and "hostile privatism" of the "white spatial imaginary," with the "black spatial imaginary" that privileges "use value over exchange value, sociality over selfishness, and inclusion over exclusion" (p. 61). He argued that Black people "turned segregation into congregation." They made officially despised Black urban spaces into "homeplaces," cultivators of cultural and intellectual life, refuges of mutual support and resistance to racist terror and oppression (Haymes, 1995), places in which people may create ways to live together differently. This counter-hegemonic Black spatial imaginary informs my analysis of current education struggles for community control, self-determination, and liberatory education. Self-determination for Black communities includes both the right to live and go to school anywhere equitably *and* the right to stay put. It is fundamentally a demand for collective political, economic, social control of Black urban space.

For me, the vision animating the Dyett hunger strike illuminates what the Black spatial imaginary might look like in education and what it offers broadly as a counter to schooling driven by the logics of neoliberal racial capitalism. When Chicago Public Schools closed Dyett in 2012, teachers, parents, students, university partners, and community organizations formed the Coalition to Revitalize Dyett to develop a comprehensive proposal to reopen Dyett as a neighborhood public high school of Global Leadership and Green Technology (Dyett High School RFP, 2015).² The proposal was the

2 As a member of Teachers for Social Justice, I participated in this coalition.

product of a vision developed by community members through discussions and forums over six years and was written collaboratively by parents, educators, and community members.

The school they proposed and fought for was a sharp alternative to dehumanizing, second-class schools that many Black children experience in Chicago and the U.S. Rooted in social justice and the dreams of working-class Bronzeville families, every aspect of the proposed school (curriculum, pedagogy, school culture and structure, leadership) was infused with the school's philosophy:

Our philosophy of education is to prepare young people to deeply understand and study their social and physical reality so they can enter the global stage of history as actors in transforming their world. . . . Education should value and build on the young people of Bronzeville, their culture, languages, experiences, history, wisdom, and elders to enable them to know who they are, where they come from, where they are going, and to love their community and themselves. (Dyett High School RFP, 2015)

Although the hunger strike forced Chicago Public Schools to reopen Dyett as a neighborhood public school (an unprecedented achievement), the campaign for the community's plan and vision is ongoing.

The plan for the Dyett High School of Global Leadership and Green Technology, the Journey 4 Justice Education Platform, and the campaign for sustainable community schools resonate with the transformative Education Platform of the Movement for Black Lives. Their proposals are a counter to the hostile privatism of neoliberal antiracism (Melamed, 2011) operationalized through school choice, selective enrollment schools to enhance elite advantages, and privatization. Rooted in the counter-hegemonic social relations and vision of the Black spatial imaginary, they are a claim to Black public space shaped by working-class community members themselves.

Abolition Democracy

These education campaigns, platforms, and visions imply that we radically rethink the meaning and practice of "democracy." The U.S.'s founding claim to democracy was an essential contradiction (Childs, 2015). A nation founded on settler colonialism, genocide of Native peoples, enslavement of African peoples, and capitalist exploitation has never been, and cannot be, democratic. There can be no political democracy without economic democracy, racial and gender justice, and self-determination. Majority rule is a hoax when a tiny minority controls the economy and shapes conditions of life for the vast majority through economic and political power, control of information, and state violence. Majority rule is not democracy under conditions of White supremacy and when the minority have no power to shape their own destiny. Liberal democracy has masked and legitimated the greatest wealth inequality in human history and the caging and policing of millions, primarily Black Americans.

This calls for a transformative notion of democracy. Recently radical scholars and social movements have reinvigorated and extended W. E. B. DuBois's call for "abolition democracy"—the abolition of all institutions and structures of

domination and exploitation and the creation of new institutions. Angela Davis (2005) explained this as "substantive as well as formal rights, the right to be free of violence, the right to employment, housing, healthcare, and quality education. In brief, socialist rather than capitalist conceptions of democracy" (p. 69). Abolition democracy "insist[s] on economic, racial, gender, and sexual justice and equality" (p. 52). It extends democracy to full political participation, self-determination, and democratic, cooperative control of the economy. In other words, the radical reconstruction of society.

While segregation is a powerful tool to enforce and maintain White supremacy, looked at dialectically, it also gives birth to solidarity and resistance. Racialized spatial containment has incubated political organizing and collective, humanizing alternatives to the "possessive individualism" and "hostile privatism" that marks the racial capitalist spatial imaginary. This dialectic represents the possibilities pregnant in an emergent racial justice education movement and campaigns for equity in education led by people of color. At this historical moment, the multiple crises of neoliberal racial capitalism and revitalized social movements have created a window in which transformative demands are eminently practical. Locating the roots of racial segregation and oppression in the long brutal history of racial capitalism opens a vista to strategies that target the ideological and structural system itself and create conditions for new, just, equitable economic, political, and social relations. The radical solidarities of the Black spatial imaginary are tools to envision new democratic practices and institutions. The discussion that is percolating among and between social movements is how to get there.

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